

Agency Information

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JOHN HOWARD LAWSON

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COMMENTS : MEMO, DATE LOWER LEFT CORNER

18. JOHN HOWARD LA
9354 Burnet Avenue, San Fernando
Empire 2-1648
Symbol #JO-1

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Original authorized 2/6/47
Latest authorization 9/30/47
Latest re-installation 12/20/48

This technical surveillance has been installed and removed intermittently since 1944.

Lawson is considered a top functionary of the Communist Party in Los Angeles and his activities as leader of the cultural Communist Party group have long been a subject of investigation. For many years, other Communists engaged in the motion picture and allied industries have taken their problems to Lawson for solution and this surveillance has proved invaluable in this regard.

Hannah Dorner of the National Arts, Sciences and Professions Council, discussing the "Bill of Rights Conference" to be held in New York City in July, 1949, asked whether anyone in Los Angeles could "get next to Charlie Chaplin to attempt to insure his presence at this Congress." Lawson stated that he would attend to this.

During the same month Herbert Biberman reported to Lawson from New York City that Paul Robeson was organizing a "Committee of non-partisans to defend the rights of Communist leaders." Lawson made his name available as a sponsor of this organization.

On July 20, 1949, it was learned that Robert W. Kenny, former California Attorney General and now candidate for the California State Senate, opposing Jack B. Tenney, Chairman of the California Senate Committee on Un-American Activities, was holding a meeting to map his campaign. Kenny's candidacy was the subject of discussion between George Pepper of the Hollywood Arts, Sciences and Professions Council and Lawson, and according to Pepper, Kenny wished to meet with them to map his campaign and it was indicated that Kenny wanted and needed their advice. Lawson suggested that Communist Party Attorney Ben Margolis also be present at this meeting. It was further learned that Allen Metcalf was being considered as Kenny's campaign manager.

Through this surveillance information was developed regarding a resolution drawn up by Herbert Biberman to be read at the West Coast "Cultural and Scientific Conference for World Peace," as well as a statement, also drawn up by Biberman, condemning the California Un-American Activities Committee and the FBI.

As the subject is the top figure in the Communist Motion Picture group this installation has been of unquestioned value having provided important information which could be obtained in no other way. It is recommended that it be continued.

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9-8-49

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Declassify on: OADR (GFK)

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NOT RECORDED
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